

You Can Live Better Where You Are

Demonstration home in Detroit sets nationwide pattern as government, private enterprise and residents cooperate to battle blight in metropolitan areas



Before and after views show how a two-tone paint job (gray-green and white), landscaping, a new front door and new porch changed the appearance of Detroit's demonstration home. ("Before" pictures were taken by Detroit City Plan Commission; "After" pictures by the Detroit Edison Company.)

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IT IS almost like a new home. It's not, of course, but the demonstration home pictured on these pages has undergone a remarkable transformation to provide the country's most dramatic example of what home improvement can mean to a community. And it has all been done at a price most home-owners can afford.

Early this year, the house at 3708 Baldwin near Mark and Genot on Detroit's east side was like thousands of other middle-aged homes in Detroit—too well-constructed to tear down, but inevitably headed towards becoming further deteriorated unless someone provided needed maintenance and remodeling. Purchased by the non-profit Detroit Home Improvement Corporation principally because it was average, the house has been completely rejuvenated.

It has been repainted inside and out and landscaped. The garage has been replaced by a black-topped parking area. The porches have been replaced. The floors have been sanded, all rooms redecorated, the kitchen

and bathroom have been completely modernized, the basement has been cleaned up and the house has been rewired.

What is the reason for all this effort? As Daniel E. Ford, executive director of the Detroit Lumbermen's Association and president of the Detroit Home Improvement Corporation says: "Many people whose homes are in need of improvement hesitate because they do not understand how to go about it or because they fear that the cost will be prohibitive. We believe that the Home will combat this reluctance by showing people what to do and how to do it. We have not spent more money on individual improvements than the average family can afford. This will serve to answer most objections concerning high cost of home improvements."

The home is a symbol of a well-planned program designed to prevent the degeneration of Detroit's middle-aged neighborhoods. And it is an outstanding example

of how a program that would be too big for government, or private interests, or the home-owners themselves, is being undertaken with cooperation by all.

It will be more than an island of good living in a run-down neighborhood. The 38-block area is the first in the nation to be approved as a neighborhood conservation project by the federal government. Financed two-thirds by the U.S. and one-third by the City of Detroit, a \$4 million war on blight is being launched. About half this money will be used to acquire land and to raise unwanted structures. Five new playgrounds are to be built and a school playground is to be enlarged. Road blocks and street diversions will be erected to discourage through traffic.

Private enterprise is taking part through the non-profit Detroit Home Improvement Corporation. Representatives of real estate, banking, building, plumbing, electrical and many other industries are cooperating with government agencies to buy old homes in Detroit's middle-aged areas, renovating them and creating demonstration homes of which the one on Baldwin is the first.

And, most important perhaps, the people of the pilot neighborhood already are taking an active interest. Leonard J. Czarniecki, executive secretary and coordinator of the Detroit Committee for Neighborhood Conservation and Improved Housing, says some residents of the area, encouraged by a hard-working neighborhood council have already completed extensive private repairs. This agency is serving as the focal point in securing the cooperation of all government and private groups interested in the project and the people who live in the neighborhood as well. Czarniecki recently counted more than 150 houses in the area being painted and 125 dilapidated alley structures have been torn down, oil drums have been removed and a systematic rodent control program has been carried out.

The demonstration home will serve for the next few months as a Home Renewal Information Cen-



Before view shows back yard after the garage was torn down, but before other improvements were made



Black-roofing the parking area, rebuilding the fence and landscaping eliminates dirt and provides living space

Interior vestibule was dingy before (left), but you would not know it was the same home after workover finished. Note how light woodwork and new wallpaper gives feeling of spaciousness and how new chest has been built-in.
Total cost of vestibule remodeling was \$200





Basement was dingy, the furnace and hot water heater needed repairing and the wiring needed attention.



The basement is now clean and light thanks to \$300 improvement. New lighting fixtures are typical of rewiring throughout the house.

Bathroom now has new tile, medicine cabinet, wash-bowl and tub in one of the most extensive changes undertaken.



ter. It will be open to the public from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays and will be used as a meeting place during the week for organizations interested in getting some first-hand pointers on home improvement.

Visiones will be told that the house was worth around \$8,600 when purchased and that all the improvements which have been made totaled slightly more than \$5,500. Under a new FHA program, the home owner in such urban renewal areas can secure loans for almost the full value of his improvements from a private lending institution that can be up to 90 per cent insured by the FHA and which can be repaid over a period in some cases as long as 30 years.

As Richard L. Steiner, federal commissioner of urban renewal said recently: "Neighborhood Conservation is destined to become a major weapon in the Nation's fight against slums and urban blight. The Mack-Concord pilot project is the first Federally-aided urban renewal project devoted predominantly to rehabilitation which has completed planning and is now in execution. It places Detroit in the forefront of the great conservation movement.

"Of particular significance is the fact that the Mack-Concord project has been planned not by a few technicians, but with the broad support and participation by many local and Federal officials, property owners and residents in the area, members of social welfare and business groups, and many other interested citizens. This project should do much to expand our knowledge of sound conservation techniques and serve as an example to other cities which will be watching its progress closely."

Detroit does not expect to stop here. Fifty-four such neighborhoods have been earmarked for similar action in the next ten years. "You can live better where you are" is the slogan of Detroit's community effort and indications are that the house on Baldwin will be the pioneer in a program that will remake the nation's cities.

Old-fashioned sink was replaced by this modern installation with birch cabinets, facacia counter-tops and disposal.

